



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON DC

Mike O'Rielly
Commissioner

June 15, 2018

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Governor
State of Rhode Island
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

The Honorable Nicholas Mattiello
Speaker of the House
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Governor Raimondo and Speaker Mattiello:

I am writing to follow-up on the issue of 9-1-1 fee diversion in the State of Rhode Island. In learning of the latest developments and proposed changes, I am reaching out to both of you to seek your personal intervention to help reverse the course and restore the sanctity of 9-1-1 fees within the state.

In April, I read comments by both of you, and received a personal commitment by Governor Raimondo, indicating support for ending the state's longstanding diversionary practice. I was heartened by this response, believing that with the support of both of you, as well as Republican State Representative Bob Lancia, there appeared to be a unique opportunity to explore the proper and necessary range of options to get this accomplished. Unfortunately, it seems my hope for a quick correction was misplaced.

Specifically, I have just reviewed the pertinent section of the latest version of the Rhode Island budget made available, and, it seems to vastly miss the mark. Instead of ending the practice of 9-1-1 fee diversion, it appears that the state plans to paper over its practices by changing the name of the consumer E911 charge. While this may alleviate the deception imposed on your citizens, it does nothing to address the funding needs of your 9-1-1 call system. To put it bluntly, your state is diverting 60 percent of the funds intended and necessary for public safety purposes to your general fund, and no amount of relabeling will resolve this reality.

I have highlighted the problems with fee diversion at length. Beyond the enormous deception being perpetrated, it's highly likely that the public safety systems are not receiving the funding that they need to operate or migrate to next generation, or NG9-1-1, systems. WJAR/NBC10 exposed this problem in Rhode Island through its investigative reporting, finding that underfunding has led to longer wait times, delayed emergency responses, worker fatigue and lower morale, and an inability to invest in new systems in your state. The professionals working at the call center in North Scituate, which I had the opportunity to visit earlier this year, deserve the most advanced emergency communications network in order to respond to Rhode Islanders in need.

Now, your citizens are paying attention. Recently Robin Giacomini, a Rhode Islander from North Providence wrote me, "It is my contention that the practice of Fee diversion creates a multifaceted dynamic that includes weakening the intent of E911, which in turn acutely jeopardizes public safety along with exacting an immoral violation of consumer rights." I could not agree more. Mrs. Giacomini, who provided testimony to the House on behalf of Rep. Lancia's legislation to end fee diversion,

suggested that as much as \$170 million in fees collected from Rhode Islanders for public safety since 2002 "is at present unaccounted for."

Based on the above, I am writing, again, to implore you to end Rhode Island's fee diversion practices. The citizens of your state deserve more than just a name change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. O'Rielly", with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael O'Rielly